

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ATHENS 07346 251630Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 7346

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR, TU

SUBJECT: MFA OFFICIAL GIVES VIEWS ON AEGEAN AIR SPACE SITUATION

1. MFA OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR TURKISH AFFAIRS, DIMITRIS MACRIS, PRESENTED HIS VIEWS ON THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE AEGEAN AIR SPACE DISPUTE IN THE COURSE OF A CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBOFF SEPTEMBER 24. HE STATED HE IS PESSIMISTIC AS TO THE LIKELIHOOD OF AN EARLY RESOLUTION BY THE AEGEAN AIR SPACE CONTROVERSY WITH TURKEY.

2. ALTHOUGH MACRIS ADMITTED THAT THE ROUND TWO TALKS IN ATHENS (ATHENS 5669) REPRESENTED SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS, THE ROUND THREE DISCUSSIONS IN ISTANBUL WERE DISAPPOINTING IN THAT THE TURKS FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON AN ISSUE (I.E. THE 50-MILE SAFETY ZONE) WHICH HE CLAIMED WAS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR CONSIDERATION IN THE AIR SPACE DISCUSSIONS. HE THEN UNDERLINED HIS PESSIMISM BY NOTING THAT EVEN THROUGH THE GREEK SIDE "WENT FAR" TO STUDY THIS "IRRELEVANT DEMAND" OF THE TURKS, EVERY PROPOSAL OR SUGGESTION IT MADE IN THIS REGARD
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PAGE 02 ATHENS 07346 251630Z

WAS REJECTED.

3. AS AN EXAMPLE, MACRIS TOLD EMBOFF THAT AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ROUND TWO TALKS GREEK MFA OFFICIALS WENT TO THE GREEK AIR DEFENSE UNIT IN PILION AND SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME WITH HELLENIC AIR FORCE TECHNICAL EXPERTS IN AN EFFORT TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE TURKISH CONCERNS AND TO BE ABLE TO OFFER PROPOSALS WHICH WOULD BE BOTH POLITICALLY AND TECHNICALLY REASONABLE. EVEN SO, HE CONTINUED, THE TURKS DISMISSED OUT OF HAND A WELL CONSTRUCTED AND TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE GREEK RECOMMENDATION (E.G. USE OF AUTOMATIC COMMON IDENTIFICATION SYSTEMS WHICH WOULD SUPPLEMENT AND VERIFY INFORMATION FROM REGULAR VOICE COMMUNICATION) WHICH SHOULD HAVE SATISFIED TURKISH ANXIETIES OVER POSSIBLE THREATENING ATTACKS BY GREEK AIRCRAFT. ADDITIONALLY, MACRIS NOTED, THE TURKS HAVE CONSISTENTLY REFUSED TO CONSIDER GRANTING ANY RECIPROCAL CONCESSIONS TO GREECE CONCERNING THE AEGEAN AIR SPACE WHICH WOULD BE ANALOGOUS TO THEIR OWN 50-MILE SAFETY ZONE DEMAND.

4. WHEN EMBOFF ASKED MACRIS ABOUT THE 1931 GREEK INTERNAL LAW WHICH PROCLAIMED A 10-MILE TERRITORIAL AIR SPACE FOR ITS ISLANDS (ANAKRA 6975), THE LATTER SAID THAT THE TURKISH SIDE HAD FIRST QUESTIONED ITS CONTINUED APPLICABILITY DURING THE ROUND ONE TALKS IN ANKARA LAST JUNE (ATHENS 4676). THIS PROMPTED AN EXCHANGE OF GREEK-TURKISH NOTES SHORTLY BEFORE THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE ROUND TWO TALKS WHICH THE GREEK SIDE THEN THOUGHT HAD RESOLVED THE MATTER SATISFACTORILY. HOWEVER, THE TURKS RAISED THE ISSUE AGAIN AT THE ROUND THREE TALKS IN ISTANBUL. WHILE MACRIS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE RATIONALE FOR SUCH AN EXTENDED AIR ZONE MADE MORE SENSE IN 1931 (I.E. FEWER AIRCRAFT, SLOWER SPEEDS) THAN IT DOES NOW, NEVERTHELESS THE FACT THE TURKS HAVE RAISED THE MATTER NOW HAS DEEPER SIGNIFICANCE THAN THE ISSUE ITSELF. MACRIS THEN COMMENTED THAT HE WONDERED WHETHER THE TURKS MIGHT EVEN BEGIN TO QUESTION THE VALIDITY OF EXISTING TREATIES WHICH VEST THE AEGEAN ISLANDS WITH GREEK

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ATHENS 07346 251630Z

SOVEREIGNTHY AND SERVE AS THE BASIC FOUNDATION FOR GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS IN THE AEGEAN.

5. COMMENT: IN THE COURSE OF THIS CONVERSATION, MACRIS EXPRESSED MORE PESSIMISM THAN THE EMBOFF HAD OBSERVED IN PREVIOUS MEETINGS WITH HIM OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS. MACRIS, EVIDENTLY IS OF THE OPINION NOW THAT THERE IS LITTLE, IF ANY, INDICATION ON THE TURKISH

SIDE THAT IT SINCERELY WISHES TO NEGOTIATE IN GOOD FAITH
THE OUTSTANDING ISSUES WHICH COMPRISE THE AEGEAN PROBLEM.
KUBISCH

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